

THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE BLACK HAND

ONE OF THE TERRORS OF LIFE IN PORTO RICO.

Masked Marauders Who Execute at Night Their Rude Conceptions of Justice—One of the Transition Features in the History of a Beautiful Island.

John H. Thacher in Harper's Weekly.

When you have observed in the New York papers that a town in Porto Rico has been burned by bandits, and, later, San Juan and Ponce travelling for a large part of their journey under an armed guard, you will no doubt form your idea of the character of the country accordingly, and straightway wish to protest against the removal of troops from such a lawless and disorganized community.

This, it will be understood, is your conception of the situation as a result of your broad observation from the Hotel Inadlerra in San Juan and the Plaza Cafe in Ponce. Your experience with the shopkeepers, moreover, may tend to confirm your conviction that all Borinquenos are lineal descendants of the buccaners.

This deduction, however, will be modified when you come to know the Puertorriquenos of the mountains. They are not, you will find, bandits by profession and law-breakers by choice, but a docile and gentle folk, whose kindly ways make your ponderous army "Cot" seem as useful and appropriate for travel in their country as would be a dress waist-coat or a silk hat.

BOYCOTT.

In addition to the more violent methods of harassing the Spanish residents, a process of isolation or boycott is used against them, by which they are prevented from procuring a sufficient number of laborers to work their plantations.

A CONTRAST.

A chance stranger is somewhat puzzled, having this knowledge of the kindly nature of the Borinqueno, to see in the town of Adjuntas and the surrounding country a more sinister spirit, evidenced by the smoking ruins of plantation-houses and acres of coffee-bushes cut down to the ground, by the hammering and left to die by the way-side, and families fleeing with their household goods to places of safety.

A DIFFICULT TASK.

It has been the business of the Sixth Massachusetts regiment to suppress this persecution of the Spanish residents, and the task has been by no means an easy one.

THE YANKEE WAY.

The ability of a handful of Americans to care for two hundred or more outlaws has been frequently demonstrated. Notably so in the case of Private Edwards, of the First Kentucky regiment.

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Sunday School Lesson for January 1.

Introduction to John's Gospel.

JOHN I. 1-14.

BY J. E. GILBERT, D. D., LL. D.,

Secretary of American Society of Religious Education.

INTRODUCTION.—The title given to this lesson by the International committee, "Christ, the True Light," is discarded as being improper. It covers only the ninth verse, and is inadequate to express the thought of the entire passage. These fourteen verses constitute the introduction to the fourth gospel, and they have been so considered by all scholars. Matthew, Mark and Luke presented brief outlines of the life of Jesus, and his prominence to the events of His Galilean ministry, and leaving their readers to infer from the narratives what their purposes were. But John, who wrote near the close of the first century, began with a statement of what was then believed in the church concerning the nature of Christ, and he selected his materials, chiefly from the words of the Judean ministry, to confirm and illustrate that view. The introduction should therefore be studied in its entirety, that the interdependence of the parts may be seen, and the force of the whole may be felt.

DIVINE.—The first thought of Christ here presented (Verses 1 to 3) is his essential Deity, the starting point and dominating truth of the book. He is called the Word (Greek, Logos), a term used in the literature of that time to denote the absolute Reason, quite the same as wisdom found in ancient writings (Prov. ix, 1). John affirms the existence of the Logos from the beginning of time (Gen. I, 1), declares his presence with God and asserts that he was God. These statements are intelligible only in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity (1 John i, 7), the relation of Christ to the Godhead being quite different from that associated in unity. To give a clearer view of the Logos, one person of the Deity, John declares that He was the sole maker of all things (Ps. xxxiii, 9). This corresponds with the account of creation by Moses (Gen. I, 9), where the word of God is employed, and with the assertions made by Paul (col. i, 16).

HUMAN.—Christ, just as shown, was a Divine person, associated with other Divine persons, existing before the material universe, calling all things into existence. John next desires his readers to know the relation of Christ to humanity (vs. 4 and 5). "In Him was life," that is, the source of life was in Him, so that every form of life on the globe proceeded from Him as a life-giving force (John v, 26). The life of man was derived from Christ at the beginning (Gen. I, 7), and is to be continued through Him (John v, 11). Here is a solution of the chief problem of science, the origin and development of life. Moreover, John continues, this life in Christ furnishes to men that illumination which enables them to discern the realities and significance of things. What the sun is to the material world, Jesus, the Logos, the Life, is to the moral world, not yet so great was the effulgence proceeding from Him, that while it penetrated the darkness of the pre-Christian ages it was not comprehended by the benighted people (John iii, 19).

WITNESSED.—The inability of men, through their depravity, to comprehend the light of life emanating from the Logos, rendered necessary some method of attestation. There was another witness for John's ministry of witness to the Divine-human Person, who had life in himself, whose life was the light of men, coming from another world to this to enlighten all men. This Person, the Logos, had been in the world all through its history, engaged in his benevolent mission, but unknown by the masses of men (vs. 9). The light which had been received by them had been misunderstood and misapprehended (John i, 19-23), resulting in all the abominations of heathendom. And when, for the purpose of making a fuller disclosure of Himself, He entered into a covenant with one family of the race (John xii, 1-5), calling them His own people and visiting them in peculiar intimacy (vs. 11). He was rejected again and again (John xii, 14). Here we have presented the deplorable condition of the human family—the larger part ignorant of that being light which shines upon the darkness, the other part opposing the light and turning away into darkness and death (Prov. ii, 13).

RECEIVED.—The ignorance and rejection just mentioned were not universal. Some of the great body of humanity, outside the covenant, though living in deep darkness knew Him who is the light of the world, and many of

of Introduction and explanation. For that purpose a man named John (John, the Baptist), was sent from God (v. 6). This statement agrees with history (Matt. iii, 1) and prophecy (Mal. iii, 1). The Baptists had no other errand—he came only to be a witness (v. 7) to that light, his one desire being to lead men to believe in that Light (John i, 36). It is true that his zeal was so great, his